

1 November 2022

Dear Parent/Carer

Scottish Ministers requested HM Inspectors conduct a special inspection of Al Qalam Academy in accordance with [section 66 \(1\) of the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). In August 2022, HM Inspectors visited Al Qalam Academy. During our visit, we spoke to parents/carers and children, and worked closely with the Executive Head, head of learning and teaching, and staff. We looked at the quality of the school's leadership, governance and management. We also explored the school's approaches to child protection and safeguarding.

Leadership, governance and management

School leaders, staff and those in a governance role at Al Qalam Academy are clear about their roles. The Executive Head has a clear vision for the future of the school. He works very closely with the highly experienced quality assurance executive (QAE), who provides robust governance, support and challenge to the school. Together, the Executive Head and QAE are clearly committed to school improvement. They take a keen and active interest in children's wellbeing, progress and achievements. The head of learning and teaching is responsible for the quality of education and the day-to-day running of the school. He carries out this role with dedication and care. He is well respected by children and families alike, who appreciate his supportive and open approach. The Executive Head and QAE should continue to monitor closely all aspects of school life, including arrangements for child protection and safeguarding. In doing so, they should ensure that all staff continue to understand fully their roles and responsibilities, and that staff follow agreed policies and procedures at all times.

Staff benefit from regular career long professional learning. Teachers have engaged in recent training to improve the classroom environment. The staff team has learned first aid skills and other important aspects of health and safety at work. Children are very keen to make use of the outdoor spaces available at their school. As a result, teachers are undertaking professional learning to develop outdoor learning in the school grounds and in the local community. As planned, the head of learning and teaching should reintroduce staff meetings and the pupil council. This will enable all staff and children to contribute more fully to school improvement. School leaders and staff should continue to build partnerships with neighbouring schools and local businesses.

School leaders and staff place great importance on ensuring the wellbeing of all members of the school community. The Executive Head and his staff provide a caring and welcoming ethos at the school. As a result, children, families and staff well feel supported. The school has clear policies and processes in place to deal with any complaints they may receive.

Safeguarding and child protection

School leaders have recently refreshed the school's policy for safeguarding and child protection. The updated policy takes full account of current national guidance and legislation and reflects well the context of the school's community of faith. School leaders with designated roles and responsibilities for child protection have good systems in place to respond to any potential child protection concerns. They have recently taken part in training

to help them to develop their skills and confidence in this role. As a result of this training, staff have made improvements to how they will record any wellbeing or child protection concerns that may occur. School leaders should continue to build on the positive start they have made to making important links with partner agencies in their new locality. This will help staff to build further their knowledge and expertise in responding to different types of potential child protection concerns.

Children say they feel safe and happy at school. They feel they are listened to and that they can talk to staff if they need help. Children have strong, positive relationships with each other and describe their classmates as their 'brothers and sisters'. Parents and carers we spoke to feel that their children are happy and settled in school. They spoke highly of how school leaders and staff support them to deal with difficult situations. They feel that staff deal with any concerns promptly and sensitively. The caring, positive relationships between staff, children and families have helped children to be resilient through the recent significant changes in school life.

The school has a well-established range of effective procedures to ensure the wellbeing of children. This includes policies for anti-bullying and the safe use of digital technology. School leaders and staff keep accident and incident logs and pupil records up to date on a bespoke electronic records management system. This comprehensive system allows the Executive Head to monitor the quality and thoroughness of record keeping across the school. Wherever necessary, staff create appropriate plans to provide targeted support for individual children's wellbeing.

Staff use learning and teaching approaches well, including through the Islamic faith, to talk to children about their wellbeing and their rights. Staff should continue to build on this to promote further children's independence and participation in their own learning. Children have enjoyed contributing to the pupil council in the past and would now welcome more opportunities to make decisions about their school. They particularly enjoy the outside space they now have. They have made imaginative suggestions to staff on how the school grounds could be improved.

We gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the school's work using quality indicators from [How good is our school? \(4th edition\)](#). Quality indicators help schools and inspectors to judge what is working well and what needs to be improved.

Here are Education Scotland's evaluations for Al Qalam Academy

Quality indicators	Evaluation
Leadership and management of staff	good
Safeguarding and child protection	good
Descriptions of the evaluations are available from How good is our school? (4th edition) , Appendix 3: The six-point scale .	

A more detailed document called Summarised Inspection Findings will be available on the Education Scotland website at [Reports page | Inspection reports | Education Scotland](#)

What happens next?

We are confident that the school has the capacity to continue to improve and so we will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. The Executive Head will inform parents/carers about the school's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Steven McPherson
HM Inspector